NOTE: The President spoke at 9:47 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House, following a meeting with congressional leaders. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Presenting the Arts and Humanities Awards
November 5, 1998

The President. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the wonderful welcome. I just realized that at the moment of greatest unity for my political party in many years, my wife has told the president of the AFL–CIO that I crossed a picket line. [*Laughter*] But it's true. [*Laughter*]

Let me join Hillary in thanking the representatives of the NEA, the NEH, the Museum and Library Services for all they have done. I thank Senator Baucus, Senator Durbin, Congressman and Mrs. Engel, Congresswoman Morella for being here and for their support for the arts and humanities. There are many, many other supporters in both parties of the arts and humanities in the Congress who wanted to be here today, but in light of Tuesday's election results in Minnesota, they're in the gym working out. [*Laughter*]

I'd like to thank our USIA Director, Joe Duffey, for being here, and a special thanks to our wonderful Secretary of Education, Dick Riley, and his wife, Tunky. Thank you for being here. Secretary Riley's going to persuade them to try to work out their minds as well as their bodies. [*Laughter*]

Paul Klee once said, "Art does not reproduce the visible, rather it makes it visible." Today we honor an extraordinary group of Americans whose daring vision and indelible contributions to arts and humanities have opened all our eyes to the richness, diversity, and miracles of the human experience.

We are blessed to live in an era of breathtaking change and unlimited possibility: an economy that is the strongest in a generation; hopeful reductions in many of our social problems; around the world, a surging tide of democracy in lands where creativity and freedom once were viciously suppressed; an emerging global community united increasingly by the technological revolution, commercial ties, and greater interaction.

But we know that change also, always, brings new challenges and, perhaps even as important, can obstruct old, unresolved difficulties. Now more than ever, therefore, we need our artists and patrons, our historians and educators to help us make sense of the world in which we live, to remind us about what really matters in life, to embody the values we Americans hold most dear: freedom of expression, and tolerance and respect for diversity.

For more than 200 years, through dance and songs, in paint or on paper, Americans have expressed their individuality and their common humanity. This tradition of our shared culture is one we must nurture and take with us into the new millennium.

Today we proudly honor 19 men and women, a theater troupe, and one organization, all of whom have laid the foundation for a new century of greater American creativity.

First, the National Medal of the Arts. More than 50 years ago, a New York City mother, looking for a way to keep her 7-year-old son off the streets, decided to send him with his sister to her ballet class. From there, Jacques d'Amboise leapt to the pinnacle of the dance, thrilling audiences as principal dancers for the New York City Ballet, landing roles in Hollywood musicals, creating timeless ballets of his own. With his National Dance Institute, he has given thousands of children, like those we saw today, the same opportunity he had, to strive for excellence and expression through dance.

Those who know him know he would walk 1,000 miles for his kids. And this spring he will be doing just that, hiking the length of the Appalachian Trail to raise money for his institute.

Ladies and gentlemen, Jacques d'Amboise.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. d'Amboise.*]

The President. From "Blueberry Hill" to Capitol Hill, and countless concert halls and honky-

tonks in between, Fats Domino has brought musical joy to millions, including me. I was this morning trying to remember all the lyrics to all the songs that I could. I will spare you a recitation. [*Laughter*]

Antoine Domino grew up in New Orleans speaking French, English, and boogie-woogie. His talent was as big as his frame and his nickname. In a career spanning half a century, his rich voice and distinctive piano style helped to define rock and roll, the music that more than any other creative force in America has brought the races together. When I heard he couldn't make the ceremony, I thought, "Ain't That a Shame." [*Laughter*] But I'm thrilled that his daughter, Antoinette Domino Smith, is here to accept the medal on behalf of her remarkable father, Fats Domino.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Ms. Domino Smith.*]

The President. When the movie "Urban Cowboy" came out, Ramblin' Jack Elliot must have laughed, because even though he sings like he was raised on the range, he was actually born, as he puts it, "on a 45,000-acre ranch in the middle of Flatbush." [*Laughter*] He left home at 15 to join the rodeo, where he learned to sing cowboy songs. But it was hearing his first Woody Guthrie record that transformed him into the man Sam Shepard called a "wandering, true American minstrel."

Since then, he's traveled the world with his guitar and recorded more than 40 albums, winning a Grammy and fans from Bob Dylan to Mick Jagger. In giving new life to our most valuable musical traditions, Ramblin' Jack has, himself, become an American treasure. Ladies and gentlemen, Ramblin' Jack Elliot.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Elliot.*]

The President. From the industrial skyscrapers of Louis Sullivan to the prairie houses of Frank Lloyd Wright to the elegant geometry of I.M. Pei, Americans have defined the field of architecture in the 20th century. No architect better expresses the American spirit of our time than Frank Gehry. From concert halls to shopping malls, he has given the world buildings that are fearless and flamboyant, that trample the boundaries of convention. There are few architects whose works so stirs the imagination that people will cross oceans just to see it built. But his Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, has attracted architecture pilgrims for years.

When people ask what America aspired to on the eve of the 21st century, they will look to the work of this remarkable man, Frank Gehry.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Gehry.*]

The President. President Franklin Roosevelt once said that the conditions for art and democracy are one. Citizen activist and arts patron Barbara Handman has dedicated her entire life to ensure that those conditions are met. Her sustained support for the arts, fighting to keep some of New York's historic theaters from going dark, serving on the city's theater advisory board, and many other activities have enriched our Nation's cultural life. Her passionate advocacy of the first amendment has enlarged our vital freedoms.

When we celebrate the arts today, we also celebrate the commitment of Americans like Bobbie, whose activism and generosity are essential, and just as essential as our artists, to the flourishing of our arts and the preservation of our ideals.

Ladies and gentlemen, Barbara Handman.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Ms. Handman.*]

The President. The revered and visionary painter Agnes Martin once told a reporter that "everyone sees beauty, and art is a way to respond." Throughout a lifetime, she has responded to the beauty of her world with luminous graphite lines, fields of white, or bands of subtle color on canvas. For more than 40 years, her quiet, spare paintings have conveyed happiness and innocence to viewers and have earned the Saskatchewan native and naturalized American a place among America's foremost abstract artists. Her work is featured in the permanent collections of our finest galleries.

Today, even into her mideighties, she continues to paint every morning, finding inspiration in the solitude of her studio in Taos, New Mexico. Ladies and gentlemen, the remarkable Agnes Martin.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Ms. Martin.*]

The President. Sixty years ago, Gregory Peck abandoned pre-med studies for the sound stages

of Hollywood. While he never practiced the healing art, his performances have helped to heal some of our countries deepest wounds. For many, he will always be Atticus Finch, the Alabama lawyer whose brave stand for justice and against racism in "To Kill a Mockingbird" stirred the conscience of a nation. He won an Oscar for that role and would star in 55 films: "Gentlemen's Agreement," "Roman Holiday," "The Guns of Navarone." He has been a tireless advocate for the arts, serving on the National Council on the Arts, as president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Today, he tours America in a one-man show, sharing memories with fans who still consider him the handsomest man on Earth. It's a great honor for me to present this award as a genuine fan of Gregory Peck.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Peck.*]

The President. We've seen it so many times in movies and in real life, a star falls ill only to be replaced by a promising ingenue who then catapults to stardom. Fifty years ago, that stage was the Met; the opera was "Don Giovanni"; and the ingenue was a 19-year-old soprano from the Bronx, Roberta Peters. She went on to achieve international acclaim, giving voice to the great heroines of opera: Lucia, Gilda, the Queen of the Night. She is, you might say, for all of us coarser types, the Cal Ripken of opera—[*laughter*]—having performed as many as 30 times a season, achieved the longest tenure of any soprano in the Met's history, and appeared on the "Ed Sullivan Show" a record 65 times. She has sung for every President from President Eisenhower to President Bush. Now it is time for this President to honor her.

It is an honor to present our next winner with the Medal of Arts. Ladies and gentlemen, Roberta Peters.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Ms. Peters.*]

The President. What Dublin was to Joyce or Yoknapatawpha County was to Faulkner, Newark is to Philip Roth. [*Laughter*] Who would have though this melting pot of immigrant aspirations, of Jews, Italians, Irish, African-Americans, would have yielded a voice as distinct and powerfully American as Philip Roth? He and his many literary alter egos, from Nathan Zuckerman to, quote, Philip Roth, unquote, have been among us now for four decades. He brought to the world's attention a generation of writers from what he calls "the other Europe," whose instinct for freedom matches his own. His last four books, "Patrimony," "Operation Shylock," "Sabbath's Theater," "American Pastoral," have each won a major literary award. Improbable as it may seem, this brash kid of Newark has become a grand old man of American letters.

Ladies and gentlemen, Philip Roth.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Roth.*]

The President. You know what he said when I gave him the award? He said, "I'm not so old as you think." [*Laughter*] And Hillary said, "It's just a literary expression." [*Laughter*]

To indulge his passion for art, something he needs, I might say, as an expatriate southerner who can never quite leave the romance of his roots, the chairman and CEO of Sara Lee, John Bryan, now just has to show up for work, for covering the walls of the Sara Lee's downtown Chicago headquarters is a vast collection of impressionist paintings by Monet, Matisse, Pissaro.

But a few months ago, Sara Lee announced that it would donate the entire collection to museums around the country. This generosity is not unusual. Under John's leadership, Sara Lee has supported the arts all across America; the Lyric Opera in Chicago, the Dixon Gallery and Gardens in Memphis are just two. From the cakes they bake to the paintings they share, Sara Lee does, indeed, nourish the world.

Thank you, John Bryan. Please accept this medal on behalf of Sara Lee and a grateful nation.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Bryan.*]

The President. The 1974 birth of Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre in a church basement has been described as "a moment when the cosmos got lucky." Through a miraculous mix of talent and vision, Steppenwolf has reconciled the contradictions of modern theater. It stages edgy, experimental productions that still manage to attract mainstream audiences. It is an ensemble company that shuns the star system, and yet it has launched its fair share of stars: John Malkovich, Gary Sinise, Joan Allen. That those stars regularly skip movie roles to act in

Steppenwolf plays speaks volumes about the magic of this theater.

To the many Tony Awards Steppenwolf has won, it is now my privilege to add the National Medal of Arts. Dr. Martha Lavey, the artistic director, is here to accept the medal, along with an historic gathering of 32 members of her troupe. And if they're out there, I'd like to ask them to stand as she comes up, please.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Dr. Lavey.*]

The President. It's every performer's dream. In 1953 Gwen Verdon exited the stage after a brief solo in the Broadway musical "Can-Can," only to hear the crowd go wild, shouting, "We want Verdon." Quite literally, she stole the show. After that first Tony Award-winning performance, she just kept dancing. Her collaboration with the great choreographer, Bob Fosse, defined the art of jazz dance. She gave brilliant performances in shows from "Damn Yankees" to "Sweet Charity" to "Chicago," winning three more Tonys and fans all over the world. In movies ranging from "The Cotton Club" to the recent critically acclaimed film "Marvin's Room," this famous redhead is showing us all that she is still alive and kicking.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ms. Gwen Verdon.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Ms. Verdon.*]

The President. Now, the National Humanities Medals.

Ever since President Eisenhower asked the then 28-year-old Stephen Ambrose to edit his papers, he has animated history with stories of great leaders and average citizens whose common denominator is their uncommon heroism. With a storyteller's ear for narrative and a scholar's eye for detail, he puts us in the shoes of our most courageous Americans, from 19-year-old citizen soldiers storming the beaches of Normandy to Lewis and Clark as they opened the American West. His work has inspired Americans to make pilgrimages to long forgotten historic sites brought to life by his prose.

Ladies and gentlemen, Stephen Ambrose.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Ambrose.*]

The President. The son of a pianist and music store owner, E.L. Doctorow is perhaps the finest chronicler of the changing rhythms of American life. From "Ragtime" to "Billy Bathgate," to "The Waterworks," he has captured the cacophony of American life and turned it into melodies that resonate in readers' minds long after they turn the final page. His narratives are such compelling physic histories of a young nation, struggling with the divergent impulses of human nature, that they have earned him both critical acclaim and popular appeal. He's a true literary lion, a caring professor, a gentle soul. I am grateful that I have had the chance to learn a lot about my country from his work.

Ladies and gentlemen, E.L. Doctorow.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Doctorow.*]

The President. Ten years ago, Harvard's Diana Eck began to notice that her students weren't just choosing her class on Indian religions to learn about a foreign culture. They were enrolling to learn more about their own heritage. She was inspired to explore how America, founded by people in search of religious freedom, has changed and been changed by the religions of our recent immigrants.

She has found the religions of the world in America's own backyard: mosques in Massachusetts, Hindu temples in Houston, and even a century-old Buddhist temple in her native Montana. And through a new CD-ROM, "On Common Ground: World Religions in America," she is helping us to appreciate not only the richness of our diversity but the strength of our shared values.

Ladies and gentlemen, Diana Eck.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Ms. Eck.*]

The President. For 10 years an adult literacy teacher struggled to motivate her students. Then, when she became a mother, she realized that a parent will do for her child what she will not do for herself. "If you want to teach a person to read," Nancye Gaj thought, "teach her to read to her children." She brought this insight to her work with female inmates in a North Carolina prison, with dramatic results. The mothers not only learned to read; their children did better in schools, and their families grew stronger. Through her literacy program, MOTHEREAD, Gaj has unleashed the power of family reading in schools and homes all across

America. Today America honors a true revolutionary of literacy, Nancye Gaj, with the National Humanities Medal.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Ms. Gaj.*]

The President. Near the beginning of this century, W.E.B. Du Bois predicted a "black tomorrow" of African-American achievement. Thanks in large measure to Henry Louis Gates, that tomorrow has turned into today. For 20 years he has revitalized African-American studies. In his writing and teaching, through his leadership of the "dream team" of African-American scholars he brought together at Harvard, Gates has shed brilliant light on authors and traditions kept in the shadows for too long. From "Signifying Monkeys" to small-town West Virginia, from ancient Africa to the new New York, Skip Gates has described the American experience with force, with dignity and, most of all, with color.

Ladies and gentlemen, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Gates.*]

The President. In high school in Beirut, Vartan Gregorian was so brilliant his teachers called him "Professor." At the Carnegie Corporation of New York, now they call him "President." But at Brown University, where he just concluded 9 successful years at the helm, he's remembered simply and fondly as Vartan, the most approachable and engaging man on campus. Public education has been his faith and greatest enthusiasm—as an Armenian child in Iran, as a student in Lebanon and the United States, then as president of the New York Public Library, where he restored grandeur and purpose to one of America's great institutions.

President, philanthropist, friend, Vartan Gregorian is, as one magazine put it, "a phenomenon." And we're proud to honor him today.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Gregorian.*]

The President. Growing up in La Jolla, California, Ramon Eduardo Ruiz spent nights listening to his immigrant father's tales of the heroes and history of Mexico. After serving as a pilot in World War II, he took his passion for Mexico's past to the halls of academia, becoming one of America's premier and pioneering scholars of Latin American history.

He has dedicated his life to exploring what he calls "the saga of the Mexican people, a story of sporadic triumphs played out on a stage of tragic drama." His history of Mexico, "Triumphs and Tragedy," is taught in colleges and universities all across our country, shaping a new generation's understanding of the heritage and homeland of millions of our fellow Americans.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ramon Eduardo Ruiz.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Ruiz.*]

The President. For more than 50 years, Arthur Schlesinger has been at the vital center of our public life. He has not only chronicled the American history, he has helped to define it, as the fighting intellectual of the Americans for Democratic Action, adviser to Adlai Stevenson, special assistant to President Kennedy. A renowned historian like his father, Schlesinger has steered Americans on a straight and sensible course through the changing tides of history, from "The Age of Jackson" to the multicultural Nation in which we live today.

As he has written of the leaders he served, Professor Schlesinger, throughout his life, has taken "the Promethean responsibility to affirm human freedom against the supposed inevitabilities of history." What a remarkable life he has lived; what wonderful books he has written.

Ladies and gentlemen, Arthur Schlesinger.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Schlesinger.*]

The President. I want to choose my words rather carefully now before honoring one of America's leading students of Presidential rhetoric. [*Laughter*] "Lincoln," Garry Wills has written, "knew the power of words to win a war, to change history, to shape a nation." Garry Wills, too, understands the power of words. And his own books and essays have given eloquent voice to our past and to our present.

In the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Lincoln at Gettysburg," he offered new perspectives on the most important speech in American history—the way it redefined our Constitution in the minds of our people and rededicated our Nation to our revolutionary ideals. Whatever his subject, politics or popular culture, the classics or even boxing, his insight is unsurpassed. I find that difficult to acknowledge from time to time.

[*Laughter*] Like his students at Northwestern, Hillary and I, and indeed, all America are grateful for his brilliant and iconoclastic scholarship.

Ladies and gentlemen, Garry Wills.

[*The President and the First Lady presented the medal and congratulated Mr. Wills.*]

The President. The late Dizzy Gillespie once said of his fellow jazz trumpeter, Louis Armstrong, who had blazed musical and professional trails before him, "No him, no me."

Today a grateful nation says to the 21 medalists in this room, "No you, no we." Thank you for opening doors of hope. Thank you for opening doors of artistic and intellectual possibility. Thank you for opening them for all Americans and lighting the way to our common future.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Patricia Engel, wife of Representative Eliot L. Engel; Ann (Tunky) Riley, wife of Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley; and actor/playwright Sam Shepard. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Statement Announcing a Presidential Mission to Central America To Assist in the Aftermath of Hurricane Mitch
November 5, 1998

The United States has close and longstanding ties with the people and governments of Central America, and many Americans have close family and cultural ties to these countries. In light of the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch, I have asked Tipper Gore to lead a Presidential mission to Honduras and Nicaragua. Mrs. Gore will travel to the region November 10–11, 1998, to demonstrate our commitment to assist the people of Central America as they recover from this catastrophe.

Mrs. Gore will deliver supplies and participate in disaster relief efforts. She will be joined by U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Brian Atwood and Members of Congress on the mission. I believe that this trip will expand awareness throughout the U.S. and the world of the devastation faced by the people of Central America in order to encourage a global relief effort.

Statement on Iraq's Noncompliance With United Nations Resolutions
November 5, 1998

Iraq's latest attempt to block the vital work of the international weapons inspectors is totally unacceptable. That is not just my belief or America's belief; it is the demand of the international community. A short while ago, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution condemning Iraq's intransigence and insisting it immediately resume full cooperation with the weapons inspectors—no ifs, no ands, no buts about it.

It is long past time for Iraq to meet its obligations to the world. After the Gulf war, the international community demanded and Iraq agreed to declare and destroy all of its chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons capability and the missiles to deliver them, and to meet other U.N. Security Council resolutions. We imposed these conditions to ensure that Iraq would no longer threaten the region or the world. We kept sanctions in place—exempting food, medicine, and other humanitarian supplies—to make sure that Iraq made good on its commitments.

Now, the better part of a decade later, Iraq continues to shirk its clear obligations. Iraq has no one to blame but itself—and the people of